February 2022 Newsletter

Article by Judy Wieber

Have you ever been made aware of a situation where the needs of one group of people infringed on the needs and rights of another? Or maybe one accommodation and access conflicted with the access and accommodation of another group of people.

If you are a frequent rider of Suffolk County Accessible Transportation(SCAT) then you have probably noticed a new addition to the 2100 buses. The county has installed a plastic shield, separating the bus driver and passengers. The purpose of the shield is to protect driver, and passenger alike from the spread of the Covid-19 Virus.

However, if you are a visually impaired passenger, and are not aware of this shield, it can become a safety issue. If you are using a walker, or mobility device you may not find the pathway from the steps to your seat wide enough to navigate. This too may become a serious safety issue.

Both groups of people have the right to be protected from the virus. Safety should always be the number one concern of all. I am sure the intent of the county is to protect; If it wasn’t, a shield would have never been installed.

Communication is the key to every good relationship. One thing the county might consider before making a commitment to purchase, is to survey the thoughts and concerns of those who will be directly impacted by an accommodation, drivers and passengers. We travel on the buses and should be consulted. A person representing each disability group, needs to raise the awareness of our special needs.

SILO’s own Marilyn Tucci, has been a superstar and champion for the rights and responsibilities of the disabled in our county, raising the awareness and the needs of the disabled. Marilyn, however, is just one woman and needs our support. She cannot do it all alone.

If something is bothering you, speak out respectfully, talk about it. If we do not let others know, then how will they know and understand?

The job of advocate is not an easy one. If we do not find our voice others may never be aware.

Check out this interesting article:  
[NBCUniversal Enhances Accessibility for 2022 Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games](https://corporate.comcast.com/press/releases/nbcuniversal-enhances-accessibility-2022-winter-olympic-paralympic-games)

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